

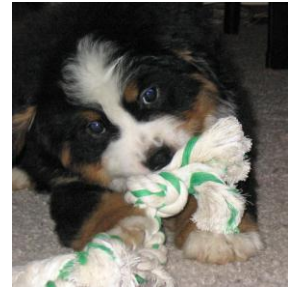
Patty and Samson's Story



Renewal: the state of being made new, fresh, or strong again.

Renewal is what happened to my life when I picked up a 10 pound, 8 week old bundle of fur who promptly started nibbling on my jacket collar to say I choose you!

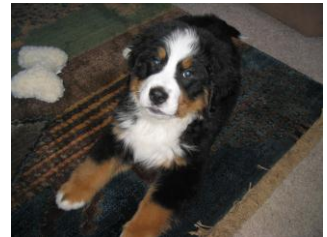
I had spent the last 15 years with my two previous dogs that had been right by my side during a lot of tough times. The three of us had all grown older together and as I said my tearful good-byes, joy walked into my life in the form of a happy rambunctious puppy.



I had forgotten how fun it is to see the world from the eyes of a puppy. Everything - a leaf, a stick, the stair railing, a table, goose poop, rocks, carpet, clothing, rabbits, cats, magazines, paper, etc. etc. need to be thoroughly inspected and other than the rabbits and cats, because he

was too slow to catch them, need to be tasted again and again, even if it did make him puke the last time.

Somehow this little stinker grew into a handsome toddler who, during those terrible two's, was affectionately given the name 'Donkey Boy' for his occasional very stubborn ways. Even at the mature age of 5, he still throws a 'Donkey Boy', now and then, sometimes at very inopportune times just in case I forget that he is, in fact, his 'own person' and knows what he does and does NOT want to do. When he 'gives in', I'm always rewarded with a huge smile (his and mine), lots of tail wagging and a look of - awww, I was just teasing.



From the moment Samson came home, he brought so much joy and laughter into my life, I knew from the start that I was very blessed to have him in my life and I wanted to share him with others, so they could enjoy his happy personality too. Being an animal assisted therapy team was the perfect solution and thus started our journey of service to the community and wonderful, heart touching moments for me.

We started visiting at Platte Valley Medical Center and on our first shadow visit Samson came across a woman in a bed, covered in blankets - typical hospital room visit. He stood at the foot of the bed and just stared at her. I noticed she wasn't moving, but in turn stared back at him. They had this staring match going for quite awhile and I was preparing myself for a big bark and us being booted out of the program, but that didn't happen. Time passed and Samson and the patient determined they had both connected in a way I would never understand, and he was ready to go see what was in the next room.

Remember 'Donkey Boy' and those inappropriate moments - well that came on our very first solo visit at PVMC. We went in the room, the patient and visitor of course were very excited about a visit and

things were going well, until alter ego 'Donkey Boy' decided to make an appearance. Quicker than a flash, he plopped himself next to the wall, away from the bed, and wouldn't budge.

A quick tug on the leash, trying to not be obvious, resulted in his collar moving up his neck to the top of his head, but no movement from him. If laughter truly is the best medicine, this patient and her visitor had a mighty healing that day!

As 'Donkey Boy' wouldn't budge I, again trying to not be obvious, pushed him across the floor with my foot all the while trying to keep composure and have a nice chat. I'm sure I scooted him about four or five feet, all the while his butt firmly planted on the floor and him not making any effort to 'walk'. I'll bet they still talk about that visit.

We've had some great visits at PVMC and just about the time I think the hospital is just a big 'Easter Egg Hunt' for doggie treats to Samson, he surprises me once again by connecting with someone on a level I will probably never understand.

One night in the ER we visited with a patient and his wife that actually brought a tear to my eye. The patient had extremely rapid breathing and speech. Samson was lying on the floor and I had turned to the wife and was wrapping up our visit.

I looked at the floor and no Samson. My eyes followed his leash and there, to my surprise, was Samson at the end of it sitting as straight and tall as he could right up next to the bed where the patient could see him and pet him. He was stretching up, in a way I had not seen before, and the longer he sat there, the quieter the patient became. His breathing slowed down to normal, his speech calmed down and I thought to myself - Samson really does know what he's doing and when he's needed. As that little tear trickled out of my eye, I realized how much we take them for granted. We have so much to learn from our best friends, if we would only take the time to really see who they are.

In addition to visiting patients and staff at PVMC, we also do a reading program at the library in Northglenn.

There is nothing more precious than seeing a small child read a page in a book, then hold it up, turn it around and with great effort show the dog the pictures. And sometimes, not only the dog they are reading too, but the picture is shown to all of the dogs in the entire room who all respond with an appreciative tail wag.



I read with Samson today!

Thanks to all of the teams that visit at this library, we've had the chance to see a boy who hated reading and was terrified of dogs, get to go to Washington DC along with his family and representatives of the Anythink Libraries and Adams County to accept the 2010 National Medal for Museum and Library Service from First Lady Michelle Obama. Our library was one of only five from across the U.S. to receive this prestigious honor.

The boy and his family were honored with this trip, because part of the reason the library won the award was due to his mother writing a letter about how reading to a dog had changed their lives and especially their son. He is now a voracious reader and they have a dog of their own. To see the huge smile on this boy's face and the excitement of his family when they returned was something we will never forget.

A week before Thanksgiving, 2010, in the early morning hours as I was soberly explained the cost of emergency surgery to save Samson's life I looked back through huge tears and said without a doubt I'll do whatever it takes.

Samson had suffered GDV (bloat and twisted stomach) and is now my miracle boy.

Bloat is the second leading killer of dogs. They can die in less than an hour and many do not recover even with surgery. Samson hung in there for about seven hours before surgery and his stomach was the size of a basketball when they began to work on him.

As I sobbed in the veterinary office, while he was in surgery, I found out just how much Samson means to so many people whose lives he's touched. I found out that most of the staff at PVMC, my friends, family, and co-workers were all praying and crying for this sweet boy. I received cards and drawings from children at the library and their families.

I realized that we truly had come full circle and even though I own Samson, he really 'belongs' to so many more. He still shows up as 'Donkey Boy', now and then, but then I see those sweet brown eyes, big smile, and happy tail-wags and say another quick prayer thanking God for saving this sweet boy who continues to serve the community we live in and his mommy every day.

I sure love you buddy!

